

**SECTION C**  
**BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE**  
**TO SUPPORT ONE-STOP SYSTEMS**

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### **3. DEVELOPING APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL FACILITIES FOR ONE-STOP OPERATIONS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the most challenging tasks for states and case study sites was designing and developing the physical facilities to house One-Stop operations. In most cases center development involved co-locating multiple partners operating out of different locations, as well as collaboratively planning for the integration of a range of One-Stop functions such as intake, assessment, and on-site training. Even in One-Stop systems that were not pursuing complete co-location and consolidation of partner operations, a transformed physical facility was a key factor in achieving the One-Stop goals of customer-friendly services, availability of self-service options, and increased ease of employer access.

#### **GOALS OF CREATING APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL FACILITIES**

Case study sites were aware that the physical sites and facilities that housed One-Stop centers would be tangible evidence of how states and local areas had realized their One-Stop visions. Although these visions varied, the federal goals of universality, integration and customer choice led most case study sites to embrace a set of common goals in the development of their physical facilities:

- Providing state support for the development of appropriate facilities.
- Accommodate the co-location of One-Stop partners.
- Design facilities that support integrated staffing and service provision.
- Design facilities that are professional, attractive and “user friendly.”
- Design centers that are accessible to customer groups with special needs.

This chapter discusses the range of activities and strategies used by case study sites to shape their physical sites in accordance with these goals.

#### **GOAL 1. PROVIDING STATE SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF APPROPRIATE FACILITIES**

States and local areas had different roles in developing physical facilities for the One-Stop initiative. Although all the case study states wanted the state to have a role

that facilitated center development, the states varied considerably in what they perceived their proper roles to be.

For some states, having an important role in local facility development was a relatively new experience. However, a number of states, determined to reduce duplication of workforce development services and apply cost-cutting measures, had already been directly involved in merging the facilities of several key One-Stop actors when their One-Stop Implementation Grant funding was approved. Beginning in the early 1990s, for example, the state of Minnesota was concerned with consolidating leases and requiring co-location of DOL-funded programs as their leases expired.

States varied substantially in the extent to which they gave explicit guidance to local areas on the design of One-Stop facilities. A few states were very prescriptive in how decisions were to be made regarding each step of the site-selection and development process. For example, Connecticut developed a “One Stop Model Office Plan,” which outlines specific steps in leasing a building and requires certain design features for One-Stop centers. Connecticut state staff emphasized to local areas the importance of redesigning the physical space and traffic flow within career centers so that the physical facility can reinforce the sense that the customer has the initiative to choose the content, delivery mode, and sequencing of services.

The state of Minnesota also used a prescriptive approach, in combination with a comprehensive process of consulting with local partners. In the interests of lowering rents and equipment costs, the state encourages sharing costs with other partners and requires co-location of agencies when their existing leases expire. Minnesota also recommends that local areas develop mobile outreach mechanisms in rural communities, choose facilities that allow One-Stop centers to be open evenings and weekends, and take steps to be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The state also requires that customer records be available electronically from any One-Stop location.

At the other end of the scale, a few states largely left the design of One-Stop facilities up to local areas. Maryland, for example, determined that it would not “dictate” to local sites, reasoning that existing leases, the availability of local space, and local budgets were the primary factors that would influence the development of One-Stop facilities.

Most other states fell in between these two extremes in how they guided facility development. These states provided relatively broad guidelines and left most aspects of the design of facilities to the discretion of entities at the local level. In Texas, for example, state guidance consisted largely of state staff meetings with local planners to make suggestions regarding space utilization and design. In Indiana, state staff monitor the appearance of One-Stop centers during annual site visits and gather information about how satisfied customers are with center appearance.

Three types of state policies indirectly influenced the design of One-Stop facilities:

- *Which services are required.* Many states require that One-Stop centers provide certain services; these requirements often impacted local areas' facilities designs. For example, Indiana mandated that certain kinds of self-access information be available in One-Stop centers, making it necessary for local areas to create space for these services.
- *Which agencies should be co-located at One-Stop Centers.* Some states required that DOL-funded partners be co-located or occupy contiguous spaces, and that the floor plan be functionally designed to encourage opportunities for team building and partnering.
- *How implementation grant funds could be used.* States encouraged local areas to use their grant funds for one-time system-transformation projects for which no other funds were available. In Minnesota, implementation grant funds could be used for facility-related expenses that consisted of initial co-location, remodeling related to complying with federal ADA requirements, and purchasing compatible phone systems.

Although the effects of most state policies were to facilitate development of integrated One-Stop facilities, state policies prohibiting “buy outs” of existing leases mitigated against effective local site development. The need to work with existing leases often hindered local sites in integrating facilities to the extent they would have liked.

## **GOAL 2. ACCOMMODATING THE CO-LOCATION OF ONE-STOP PARTNERS**

Most states and local sites were committed to the principle of co-locating key partners in One-Stop centers. Staff believed that physical proximity of programs and agencies not only benefited customers—by making services seamless and convenient to

access—but also benefited staff by making it easier to coordinate activities and to cross-train staff in other programs.

A few sites were able to accommodate all or most partners' offices either in the same building or in the same "campus" area. The following two cases exemplify this approach.

Planners and staff for the Workforce Center of Anoka County were able to locate their center on the "campus" of the Human Services Center, located on ten well-landscaped acres. Reasonable rent and several floors of space contributed to the relative ease of co-location of six major partner agencies, and enabled a total of forty agencies to be located within the complex. Key One-Stop partners include the mandated workforce development programs as well as county agencies representing welfare, social services, and mental health programs. Although Anoka County received Implementation Grant funding to assist with remodeling costs, the physical facility also was supported by many other funding sources. Funding providers included the City of Blaine, which donated the land; United Way of Minneapolis, which contributed \$500,000 over five years for program operations; and the McKnight Foundation, which assisted agencies with relocating to the center. Because the building is publicly owned, rental costs are lower than in comparable commercial sites.

Wisconsin's Waukesha County Workforce Development Center is a second example of extensive co-location. The center's key partner agencies, each representing major funding streams, had been working collaboratively for several years prior to the opening of the center in 1995. The center is situated on the campus of the Waukesha County Technical College, at a site designed specifically to house the One-Stop center. The basic partnership for providing coordinated services consists of the Wisconsin Job Service, the Private Industry Council, county agencies concerned with health and human services and economic development, and the local technical college. Other local agency partners providing specialized services to targeted populations are also located at the center. The Workforce Development Center facility was built with funds from the local Technical College. Partners share facilities costs through lease agreements with a third party foundation, which holds title to the facility. Additional funding was received through the One-Stop Implementation grant and a One-Stop Local learning Laboratory grant.

More commonly, sites began by co-locating some agencies—usually DOL-funded programs—and developing alternative ways for allowing these core agencies to collaborate with other partners.

In some cases, partners whose main business location was elsewhere were able to outstation a staff member at the One-Stop center, usually for several days a week. For example, at the Columbia (Maryland) Employment and Training Center, core partners are co-located in a small strip mall and jointly manage a center that houses the ES and UI staff, and the county JTPA unit. Two additional coordinating partners, the local community college and the Business Resource Center, have their main offices elsewhere, but provide workshops for One-Stop center customers in a classroom space in the same mall as the One-Stop center.

Other sites co-located key partners and developed electronic linkages with other partners. Several local sites, including the Arlington Career Center in Texas, were unable to find a facility large enough to incorporate all local One-Stop partners. In these cases, on-site co-located key partners are supported by staff from agencies linked electronically to the centers, and as well as staff available on-site on a part time or “as-needed” basis. For example, in Arlington, the career center housed predominately JTPA-funded staff. However the center was located within a block of the local ES and UI center office, whose veterans employment services staff made themselves available “on call” to customers at the One-Stop center. In addition, an ES/UI staff member was out-stationed at the center during the period of review.

Most sites faced a variety of barriers to achieving the desired level of co-location and as a result had to compromise as they developed their physical facilities. These barriers included the following:

- *Constraints created by existing leases.* Leases with several years left, particularly in those states which had a policy of no lease buy-outs, often prevented key partners from moving to a more suitable shared facility; in these cases, remodeling adjacent spaces (e.g., removing a wall) was sometimes an interim solution. In one site, however, the JTPA agency was able to “swap” its existing lease with another federal agency, so that it could relocate to the building occupied by the Employment Service.
- *Constraints of site availability.* For those sites seeking a new location, an important consideration was finding buildings large enough to accommodate all partners wishing to co-locate initially and for those

wishing to relocate at a later date. The space needed to be flexible enough to accommodate resource libraries, orientations, mass employer recruitment situations, or Job Fairs. Often, during the first year of operations, such space had not been found. Some sites, therefore, adopted a “make do for now” attitude.

- *Constraints of existing space.* In some sites, the limitations of existing or available facilities made integration of the spaces occupied by side-by-side partners a difficult goal to achieve. For example, in Columbia, Maryland, center planners attempted to reengineer existing space to accommodate partners’ needs. But working around an existing structure posed formidable problems in arranging an attractive and customer-responsive facility. As a result, in Columbia, JTPA staff are located on the opposite side of the facility from ES and UI staff, which is not conducive to shared service functions.
- *Limited budgets.* Budget limitations also influenced site selection and physical accommodations, particularly where local sites had little funding support except that which was provided by states through their Implementation Grant funds. Sites with additional funding sources were able to develop sites that better met the goals of integrated service delivery.

### **GOAL 3. DESIGNING FACILITIES THAT SUPPORT INTEGRATED STAFFING AND SERVICE PROVISION**

Once decisions were made about the site (i.e., moving to a new facility or remodeling an existing one), the next step was determining how to configure the available space to facilitate the integration of staff and services. Centers developed or modified their facilities in the following areas: (1) the “entry” space or reception area, (2) resource and information areas, (3) shared office space, and (4) other shared space, including conference rooms and classrooms. Approaches to configuring each of these areas are described below.

#### **Reception Areas**

All the centers had an integrated reception area. These areas were usually located immediately at the entrance and were furnished with a desk, at which the receptionist sat, and seating for customers who were waiting for services. This arrangement allowed a single staff person, usually funded by multiple agencies, to help customers reach the appropriate services and begin the preliminary eligibility determination process.



Many centers have designed reception areas in which staff can make good use of their time until staffed services become available. No longer required to “take a number and wait,” customers in most centers can interact immediately with knowledgeable staff. If required to wait for services, customers usually had access to materials to orient them to the center so that they could make productive use of their time while waiting.

For example, some One-Stops centers have equipped their reception areas with television monitors on which customers can watch videos presenting information about the center’s services. Others made written materials available in the reception areas. At the Lawrenceburg Workforce Development Center in Indiana, customers waiting for services can view instructional videos, including an introduction to work readiness skills, job search techniques and interviewing tips. Customers have a choice of sitting in chairs near a window or at round tables well-stocked with magazines and publications.

### **Resource and Information Areas**

Most centers established space to house integrated resource rooms, in which customers can use self-access information and training services. Information and resource areas in some centers are equipped with semi-private work station “cubicles,” equipped with computer terminals. Often resource areas include monitors so that customers can view informational videos. Centers also made space available in their resource areas for a staff member or “librarian,” who can help customers.

For example, Baltimore’s Eastside Center’s two-room “resource area” is equipped with terminals in work stations, which customers can use to access labor market information and job listings. Copy and fax machines are another important feature available to customers in resource rooms in a number of sites.

### **Staff Offices**

Many centers have arranged staff offices so that staff performing the same function are located together, regardless of which agency or program pays their salary. Grouping offices by function also allows centers to consolidate staff that need special types of space.

At some centers, staff office areas are in plain view to emphasize their accessibility and facilitate interactions among staff from different programs. For example, at the FutureWorks Center in Massachusetts, the most visible office is that of

the center director who makes herself available to individual and employer customers. At the Columbia Maryland site, most staff have low walls to provide an atmosphere of openness. At the Indiana Eastside Center, staff are intermingled in an area where only managers have doors to their offices.

### **Shared Conference and Classroom Areas**

Most centers also contained areas, such as classrooms and conference rooms, that are shared by all center partners. For example, the center in Waukesha, Wisconsin, has a large number of shared spaces: rooms in which staff can conduct training and group activities; conference rooms in which to hold staff meetings; and a space jointly used for mailing, copying and other administrative functions.

Similarly, Baltimore's Eastside Center has four classrooms and conference rooms in which partners can hold classes or workshops, and where employers can conduct interviews. Equipment such as faxes and copiers are also identified as shared resources and are available to all partners.

As illustrated by the examples above, many One-Stop centers have configured their spaces to emphasize that the center has a unified approach to serving customers. However, other One-Stop centers' goals for configuring space to accommodate integrated services were not always attainable, particularly during the first year when existing facility leases and reduced program budgets constrained them from making all the changes that they desired.

### **GOAL 4. DESIGNING FACILITIES THAT ARE PROFESSIONAL, ATTRACTIVE, AND "USER-FRIENDLY"**

One major goal for One-Stop planners was to design the centers to make them more attractive and inviting to their customers. In many centers, customers reported that the previous facilities were dingy and crowded, with bank-teller type windows and long lines that wasted the customers' time. The objective of most sites, therefore, was to design interior space with an atmosphere conducive to improving the capability of customers to "get what they came for," to give them a feeling of dignity, and to help them make good use of their time while at the center.

Several features of the One-Stop center that facilitated integrated services, described above, also contributed to improving the attractiveness of the centers. In most centers, the atmosphere of reception centers was far more attractive and business-like than that of the previous waiting areas. The resource area in many centers is also

designed to look like a business office. As described above, some centers have designed information resource areas with work stations and cubicles. Office equipment, such as faxes, copiers, and printers are placed in visible areas. One-Stop staff have indicated that making the resource area business-like has significantly increased its use by the general public.

Some sites determined that their center's attractiveness was also affected by the amount of space devoted to service functions. As a result, they increased the amount of center space devoted to use by customers, including both individuals and employers. Designing areas that ensured customers' privacy also contributed to the business-like nature of the centers. For example, in the Eastside Workforce Development Center in Indiana, the resource area is furnished with work station cubicles, giving customers privacy while working at the computer terminals or researching information.

Employers also benefited from designers' attempts to make center sites more attractive and professional. For example, staff indicated that New London's new attractive site attracted employers; at their previous site, employers "would not come near the place." In one site, employers have a separate entrance and reception area. Wherever possible, designing the exterior area to be more attractive was an important part of improving the center "image." For example, Anoka County's Workforce Center is located within a well-landscaped area of an attractive complex of buildings, and the New London Center in Connecticut is located in an attractive mall.

A member of the staff at the Waukesha County Workforce Development Center in Wisconsin said that they "expect the center to be viewed as a professional entity dedicated to comprehensive, high-quality workforce development needs for all individuals and employers, rather than as a human services agency that portrays a welfare image."

#### **GOAL 5. DESIGNING CENTERS THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE TO CUSTOMERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

For center planners, the goal of universal accessibility presented a number of challenges to facility planners, particularly to accommodate individuals with disabilities and parents with children.

Designing the facility to accommodate individuals with disabilities was easier where One-Stop partners were moving to new facilities. At its new site, the Eastside Workforce Development Center in Indiana, for example, built an outside ramp that

leads to the front entrance used by other customers. Several states, like Minnesota, mandated that all One-Stop centers be retrofitted to meet ADA requirements. For older existing buildings, however, it was more difficult to comply with federal and state standards, particularly where the center was located on more than one floor. Some localities, such as the FutureWorks Center in Massachusetts adapted some of their interior equipment to the needs for the hearing or sight impaired, and the state of Minnesota mandated that these adaptations be made in each of their One-Stop centers.

In a few sites, space was configured to meet the needs of adult customers with children. A “kids space” off to one side equipped with toys and a snack room with vending machines was an amenity that many parents valued. The Waukesha (Wisconsin) Workforce Development Center has a child care facility that cares for young children when their parents are visiting the center. Des Moines Workforce Development Center in Iowa has created a “kids space” in one corner of the reception area with books and games for children and a large aquarium.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS, CHALLENGES, AND NEXT STEPS**

All sites had created new space or renovated existing space to make the One-Stop center facility support the One-Stop goals of universality, customer choice and integrated services. Case study sites were able to make substantial progress in finding appropriate sites and designing appropriate facilities.

- All sites were able to co-locate multiple partners; a few developed sites for a broad range of agencies.
- Within these facilities, most sites were able to configure the space to facilitate integrated services.
- The environment in most centers was attractive and business-like. These characteristics can greatly facilitate attracting a broad range of customers, both individuals and employers.

Despite these accomplishments, however, centers were not able to accomplish all their goals for One-Stop facilities. They faced several constraints, including: existing leases that could not be bought out; existing spaces that could not be modified to the extent needed; and limited funding. Further some sites were reluctant to make long-term commitments for reconfigured space while they were still uncertain about which agencies wanted to be co-located and what their space and equipment needs would be.

Thus, the case study sites are expected to continue to make revisions to their physical facilities in the next several years. As existing leases expire and partnerships solidify, more centers will be able to develop facilities that more fully support their One-Stop goals.

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